Name _____ **B**

The Farmer Cares For the Land

SOIL EROSION

Soil erosion is what happens when soil is washed or blown away. In most places, trees, grass, and other plants hold soil in place. When that vegetation is removed, winds and rains can carry soil away. Over the years, farmers have removed unwanted grass, weeds, and other vegetation from the soil before planting their crops. Cattle and other farm animals also can remove all the vegetation from an area if there are too many of them left in one place for too long. Once gone, soil takes several hundred years to regenerate.

On the Southern Plains, the soil is sandy; annual rainfall is low; there are large, open areas; and high winds are common. The first settlers allowed livestock to roam and graze the Plains until there was little vegetation left to hold the soil in place. Early in the 20th century, farmers plowed up the natural grass cover on the Plains and planted winter wheat. Between 1934 and 1937, the area had less rainfall than usual. With large areas of plowed land having no grass root system to anchor it, much of the soil blew away. The dust storms and sandstorms buried roads and houses. Clouds of dust reached as far east as Washington, DC.

In response to the disaster, the federal government created the Soil Erosion Service and the Civilian Conservation Corps to find ways to recover the land. Workers replanted grass, planted trees and showed farmers scientific agricultural methods to help them protect the soil.

One method was to put large numbers of animals out to graze on one piece of land for a short time period and then move them to a new pasture. This allowed the animals to get the nutrition they needed while cutting down on overgrazing and erosion.

Another method was no-till farming. A farmer using this method planted crops directly in the plant stems, stalks, and leaves from the last harvest. For this method to work, the farmer must use herbicide to kill unwanted grass and weeds. This method stops erosion, but some people worry that the herbicides may pollute the underground drinking supply.

Problem	
Solution	
Cause	
Effect (s)	

Does the solution create another problem? If so, what is it?_____

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